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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

98-120

HENRY E. PRICE
PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER

February 4, 2005

VIA FACSIMILE
(202) 225-1512

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The Honorable Melvin Watt
2236 Rayburn House Office Building
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3312

Dear Mel,

Congress is actively considering many aspects of the ongoing digital television transition and plans to hold hearings to consider the impact of the transition on the people most directly affected—American consumers. However, on February 10, 2005, the FCC plans to vote on a key element of the digital transition that could deprive consumers of the ability to receive new, innovative and locally oriented programming being developed by television broadcasters for transmission on their digital channels.

By taking this expected action, the FCC will be pulling a single strand out of a very complex tapestry and prejudging important issues in a way that will make Congress's role in managing the digital transition much more complex and difficult, and will inhibit, rather than encourage, the transition to digital. The FCC should not be permitted to jump the gun and preempt decision-making on this important issue before the new Congress has had an opportunity to hold even a single hearing.

The vast majority of commercial television stations in the United States have completed the build-out of their digital facilities in full compliance with the schedule established by the FCC. Additionally, broadcasters have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in building out our digital facilities with no government subsidies and are operating them now in tandem with their analog facilities. These new digital facilities make it possible for television stations to broadcast high-definition programming of unparalleled visual quality and to offer

The Honorable Melvin Watt

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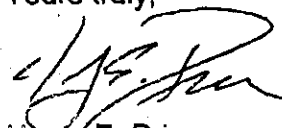
multiple streams of new programming by using digital compression techniques that enable "multicasting."

Currently, the benefits of digital television—including high-definition and multicast programming—are available over-the-air only to a fraction of the viewing households in America: the very small minority who have purchased expensive digital television sets with built-in digital receivers.

The introduction of new multicast services – by increasing choice and diversity in available programming – will undoubtedly stimulate consumers to invest in digital television sets, thereby helping the digital transition to progress. But over-the-air viewing is not enough – Congress and the FCC recognize that cable carriage is essential to the survival of a broadcast channel, particularly because most Americans likely will depend on subscription services such as cable for delivery of digital television signals.

The FCC's expected action will not serve the public's interest in maintaining a diverse and free over-the-air broadcast system or in fostering a consumer-friendly digital transition. Congress should act promptly to prevent the FCC from taking these actions.

Yours truly,



Henry E. Price

cc: Michael K. Powell



HENRY E. PRICE
PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER

February 4, 2005

VIA FACSIMILE
(202) 225-5662

The Honorable Bob Etheridge
US House of Representatives
1533 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Bob,

Congress is actively considering many aspects of the ongoing digital television transition and plans to hold hearings to consider the impact of the transition on the people most directly affected—American consumers. However, on February 10, 2005, the FCC plans to vote on a key element of the digital transition that could deprive consumers of the ability to receive new, innovative and locally oriented programming being developed by television broadcasters for transmission on their digital channels.

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Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. E. Price", written over a horizontal line.

Henry E. Price

cc: Michael K. Powell